

Follow In His Steps

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today. If you're new or visiting with us, welcome. We're glad that you're here.

And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good that they don't need God's grace and no one so bad that they can't have it. In other words, everyone needs to hear what God has to say. And so that's why we come week after week, every Sunday, and look at what God has to say to us in his word.

If you've been with us, you know that we're in the book of 1 Peter. And the book of 1 Peter is a letter written by a man named Peter. And he writes it to Christians who are living in the first century A.D. in what is now modern-day Turkey.

And he writes because these Christians are facing some struggles. They're feeling out of place in the world because they're Christians. And they're also facing opposition from the world because they're Christians.

[1 : 05] Peter writes into that situation to encourage them and to instruct them. He writes to encourage them that Jesus is worth it. Jesus is worth living for. He's worth loving for.

Jesus is worth suffering for. He's worth dying for. And he also writes to instruct them how they should live as Christians in the world, especially when they face opposition. Now, last week, if you were with us, you know that we looked at Peter's instructions for how to relate to the government. And Peter told these folks that are receiving his letter that their posture towards the government should be one of submission. Even though they belong to God, they've been chosen by God, they are what he's called earlier a special holy nation.

Verse 9, even though they're our own separate nation, they belong to God. They have such a radical new identity that doesn't free them to do whatever they want and ignore the government around them. And he ends that section by telling them that they need to honor everyone.

Verse 17. And so we're going to enter a section now that's sort of following up on that, the honoring. And also what we saw a couple weeks ago about them being a royal priesthood.

[2 : 12] Remember, they're priests to the nations, so they're meant to represent God to the world. That people would understand and know what God is like because of how his people act and how they behave. And not only are they priests, but now we know that as they're priests, as they're representing God, they're meant to honor other people.

Taking those two ideas, we have our passage before us today. It's going to be somewhat different for us because he's going to be talking to slaves who are living in first century Rome. And of course, we're not slaves.

We don't have slavery as an institution in the United States. And so we're going to have to take sort of broad principles from what he tells them and apply them to us today. But think about it in the category of honor.

He's continuing to give these people instructions about how they honor everyone and how doing that they can represent Christ well. And we're also going to see in this passage not just represent Christ well, but follow Christ well.

And so with that, we're going to turn to our passage. We're in 1 Peter 2, starting at verse 18. And remember, as we come to this, God tells us that this is his word. And he tells us that his word, unlike the grass which withers and the flowers which fall, will stand forever.

[3 : 24] And so that's why we read now, starting at verse 18. Verse 20.

Verse 22.

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Father in heaven, we thank you that you're a good father. And like a good father, you want to instruct us.

[4 : 55] You want to talk to us. You want to be with us. You want to train us and you want to raise us. We ask that you would do that this morning. That you'd use your word to give us instruction.

And even more than that, you would use your Holy Spirit to encourage us. That we would see Jesus as more beautiful than we'd seen him before. And that you'd grow our faith and our trust in him.

We ask these things not because we have earned them or deserve them, but because Jesus has earned them for us. And so we ask them in his name. Amen.

When I was a teacher back in the day, I had kind of two TV show binge seasons every Christmas. When I had Christmas break, that was my chance. I think I need to decompress. I haven't really watched shows during the semester. I've just been trying to keep up with these students. So Christmas was my time. I would pick a show and I'd watch a whole season.

[5 : 58] And then also summertime was my time. So after each semester essentially, so the spring semester would end. I think, okay, I'm done. I have a summer break. I have a few kind of odd jobs I'm doing. But I have to have some time to decompress here.

So I'm going to watch a couple seasons of this. And one summer, the show that I picked was Down Abbey. So I binged through season one and season two. This was back in probably 2013.

And I will confess near the end of season two, it got a little too soap opera-y for me. And so I never made it to season three. But seasons one and two were glorious.

I mention that because as we're coming to this passage, we're talking about sort of a challenging issue here. Because Peter is writing to people that he calls slaves.

It translates it servants here in verse 18, which is helpful for us. But he's told them earlier in some translations you'll find this translated slaves. And it's difficult for us to understand exactly what's going on.

[6 : 55] Because we didn't live in first century Asia Minor under the Roman Empire. And so when we're talking about servants, if we're on a scale of American slavery on the left and Downton Abbey downstairs people on the right, we're not all the way to the Downton Abbey downstairs people, but we're pretty close.

So if this is the center, we're right of center moving towards Downton Abbey. That's helpful at the beginning. We have to understand what Peter is talking about when he's talking about servants here.

The word here is different than the word slave earlier that was used in a previous passage talking about us being slaves of God. And so these servants are people who would work in houses.

In fact, this is a section about how people get along in a household. And so these are specifically house servants. And it's just challenging for us to understand because there is no one-to-one correlation in our culture for what he's talking about, these kinds of servants.

One definition that someone gives is that this is a semi-permanent employee without legal or economic freedom. A semi-permanent employee without legal or economic freedom.

[8 : 03] So not American slavery, not Downton Abbey, but somewhere close. Passages like this are difficult because it's hard to think through how do we make sense of the fact that someone is writing to slaves and they don't openly condemn slavery.

And they also don't encourage these people to revolt, right? They're not saying you're under an unjust system, you need to overthrow it. And that creates a lot of problems for us as Americans because we think about our past and the sin of slavery in American history.

And it raises a question. It's a natural question, right? Why doesn't Peter condemn this right away? And why doesn't he also give them different instructions? Why does he ask them to operate within the system that they're in?

So I'm not going to say everything about slavery in the New Testament, but I'm going to try to say something as we come to this passage because it's important for us to understand what it is that we should take away from the Bible. First of all, Peter is not endorsing slavery.

Instead, he is helping these Christians to understand how they should live within the social structure that they already find themselves in. Clearly, Peter doesn't think that the Roman Empire is something to be imitated.

[9 : 14] In fact, he's called these people exiles, right? Because they don't fit in with the Roman Empire. This is the empire that's persecuting them. Second, it's an empire, not a democracy.

So had they at this point decided, hey, we're going to revolt and take down slavery, if you know anything about the Roman army and the Roman government, you know that would have been the end of the Christians. And so this is not necessarily telling us how we as Christians think about certain social structures and our abilities to influence them in the United States because we're just in a completely different system.

So don't take this passage as discouragement, right, for appropriate political activism. Don't take it as discouragement for fighting for what's right in our government. We're a democracy. We have the ability to do that.

We don't live in the Roman Empire. Peter's strategy here is not overthrow, it's subversion. I had a seminary professor one time who said, Christianity, it's radical, but it's not revolutionary.

It's radical, but it's not revolutionary. We don't find New Testament writers pushing for the overthrows of government, the overthrow of certain systems. And part of that's because of the system that they're writing to, right?

[10 : 28] The New Testament's written during the Roman Empire, so that's not a plausible strategy under that governmental system. And so it's a different strategy that Peter uses, and that's used in the New Testament.

It's more of subverting structures rather than overthrowing them. And so Peter does that. He subverts, in some ways, the topic of slavery. First of all, slaves would have been expected to worship the God of their master.

Peter subverts that. He doesn't ask them to do that. Second, in the similar kinds of writings in the first century, slaves would not have been addressed directly as people. Servants wouldn't have been addressed directly, because they wouldn't have been considered worthy of the dignity or respect to receive a direct address.

In other words, they would be talked about rather than talked to. And so Peter here affirms their human dignity by addressing them directly. He doesn't say, oh, well, you're a servant, you're in this slave-like position, and so obviously you're also of lesser value in the church, so I'm going to address you in that way.

I'm actually going to talk about you rather than to you. And so there's something here. It's radical, not revolutionary. There's something about the New Testament that's also realistic rather than idealistic.

[11 : 38] It's realistic rather than idealistic about how these folks who were living in the Roman Empire operated in the social structures they found themselves in. Another thing that's been pointed out about what Peter does here is he acknowledges something that other people in the Roman Empire would have not acknowledged, which is that when these slaves suffer, it's what?

Unjust. In fact, we hear that word twice in this passage. They're to submit, verse 18, to the unjust. Verse 19, it's a gracious thing when they endure sorrows while suffering unjustly.

Now, I'd also be remiss if I didn't note at this point that this passage has been abused in the history of America. So this passage has been abused to tell American slaves that they needed to submit. However, the logic of this whole passage is how do non-Christians interact with Christians?

If you're a Christian, how do you interact in a non-Christian setting? In other words, the assumption is that the people who have these servants are not Christians. They don't have faith in Christ. And so it's an abuse of this passage for someone who is over slaves to tell it to slaves.

Because what they're saying by using that passage, the logic only works if the person who's the slave owner is not a Christian. Because this passage is about how Christians get along with non-Christians.

[12 : 58] That's the whole point of this. In fact, we're going to talk next week, in the next two weeks, about husbands and wives. The assumption of the passages about husbands and wives is that this is a husband who's married to a woman who's not a Christian.

And it's a woman who's married to a husband who's not a Christian. So it's not generic advice about marriage, although it has principles for marriage in it. But it's specific advice to someone who's interacting with a non-Christian. Same thing is true of this passage.

It's not general advice, but specific advice. You're a servant. You're in a non-Christian government and world. There are certain realities to that world that you have to operate in.

The people that are over you are not Christians. You're not going to be able to change it. How can you subvert it and function within it? Okay, deep breath. That's all background to talk about what Peter has to say about servants here.

The second difficulty is because there is no category like this for us. We don't have the kind of servanthood institution that was in the Roman Empire. There's no one-to-one application for us.

[14:01] And so we have to deal. What I hope happens when you listen to sermons, and I hope this is true of my preaching from time to time, you don't just learn things that are true, but you also learn how to read the Bible. Part of what we do when we read the Bible is we look at instructions to certain people in a certain time, and we say, how does that apply?

What's the principle in that situation that we can apply to our situation? So, for example, when I preached the book of Nehemiah, there was no point at which I said, you know, the book of Nehemiah, it's about God's people rebuilding God's wall.

And so the point is this. We're going to build a wall around the church. It's clearly God's command, right? God told the people in the Old Testament to build a wall. We need to build a wall, too.

No. We take the principle that applies to people in Nehemiah, we apply it to us today. Same thing is true with these passages about slaves or servants. What's the principle that's being used?

How can that principle apply to us? How can we apply it in our situations, which are nothing like first century Roman citizens in Asia Minor? That being said, there's a narrow application and a broad application.

[15:07] First, we, like people receiving this letter, have to exist in structures in this world. Some of you are in the military. Guess what?

The military is not a Christian institution. Sometimes you have masters or people who are over you who are just, and sometimes they're unjust. Some of you are students who go to schools.

You have teachers. Some of them are not Christians who are in authority over you. Some of them are just. Maybe I'd say some of them are fair. Some of them are unfair. Now, that doesn't mean you can't have your parent intervene.

Right? That would be appropriate. I'm not advocating for people to be passive, but the reality is that we live in situations where people who are not Christians who are in authority over us, just like these people in this passage.

And so, just like the people who are receiving this passage have people in authority over them that are not Christians, and their goal is to respect them and honor them as much as possible for the name of Jesus Christ, our goal is to honor and respect the people who are in authority over us as much as possible.

[16:14] That means if we have a commander over us who we think is a terrible commander, and God's placed him in that position of authority, we honor him as much as possible.

If God has given us a boss, and we think that that boss is a terrible boss, and by terrible, I mean bad at their job, right? We honor that person as much as possible.

And we honor them for the sake of Jesus. We're not disorderly employees, right? Probably the closest application I could make would be to people working at a job.

Servants, be good servants. Employees, be good employees. How are you going to share the gospel with your co-worker if they know that you are a terrible employee?

Hey, I want to tell you about Jesus and everything that he's done in my life. And they're thinking, I really wish Jesus would do a lot more in your life. All of this is under the category of how we represent God to the world as priests and how we honor all people.

[17:21] And so the application for us is that we honor our employers as much as we can. We support our bosses based on their position as much as we can. And we do what we can to be respectful and speak well of them.

This goes back to the principle we talked about last week when it comes to government. We speak well of those who have positions in government, whether we approve of their policies or not. It doesn't mean we can't work against their policies.

It just means we treat them with respect. There's a subversive principle here for all Christians. Part of our witness, part of how we share the gospel and the good news about Jesus is by showing the people we interact with in the world the most respect we can and submitting to the authorities that are over us as much as we can, like we talked about last week with the caveat, as much as we can without sinning.

And that is subversive. Do you really want to do something radical? Some Christians who talk about trying to live a radical life for Jesus Christ.

1 Peter shows us how to live a radical life for Jesus Christ. You want to be a radical Christian? Be a great employee. You want to be a radical Christian? Honor your teachers.

[18:40] Honor those people in authority over you. Finally, there's a persecution element to this. There's an assumption that these slaves are going to be treated improperly because they're Christians.

And in fact, that's sort of some of the assumption of this whole section. And in fact, the whole book. You're Christians, therefore you're going to receive mistreatment. And so, there's a broader application, not just in our workplaces, in the places where we have people in authority over us, but when we face suffering for the name of Jesus Christ, we respect and honor the people who are persecuting us as much as possible.

And in fact, that's the example that Peter's going to tell us that Jesus has given us. So we function as much as we can in society with a good conscience, without sinning, honoring the people who have authority over us.

And by the way, we have it a lot better off than the people this letter was written to. If those who received this letter could honor the people in authority over them, and Peter commanded them to do it, how much more can we honor the people who are in authority over us?

How much more? Of course, some of the logic of God's word is that he never commands us to do something he doesn't empower or enable, and so we don't just see instructions here.

[20:11] We also see Jesus very quickly. Verse 21, For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

Now, we sometimes can be in dangerous territory, where we talk about Jesus as our example. In the evangelical church, we focus heavily on Jesus as our Savior, and that's appropriate. He is our Redeemer.

In fact, some people become suspicious when we start talking about Jesus as our example, because that's often what's used to negate the fact that Jesus is our Redeemer. So people will say things like, Jesus was a good example.

He's a good teacher. He didn't necessarily die or rise from the dead, but he's a great example. And so because of that, sort of as a pendulum swing, some people have pushed so far against it that they say, Jesus is not our example.

He's our Savior. One of the other objections that's raised is that, well, Jesus is our example. That gets us into all sorts of problems, right?

[21:08] Jesus is our example. So Jesus was a carpenter. I guess that means we all need blue-collar jobs, right? Jesus was single. Wow, that works out really well for me. We have to be careful when we talk about Jesus as our example.

We don't get just to throw it around, right? There was a movement back in the 90s where people would wear these bracelets, the WWJD bracelets. What would Jesus do? Sort of this hypothetical. I was reading one person talking about this passage, and they said, the real question is not what would Jesus do, what did Jesus do? And in the context of this passage, Jesus is an example in a specific way.

It's not generally an example. We don't just get to pull anything from Jesus' life and grab it and say, Jesus is my example for this. Jesus helped Peter catch a lot of fish. My goal is to catch a lot of fish. But we follow Jesus as an example in the way that Peter tells us to follow him as an example. Christ left us an example, verse 21, so that you might follow in his steps.

[22:13] What was the example, verse 22? He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

You feel out of place because you're a Christian? Guess what? Jesus felt out of place too. You face opposition because you follow Jesus?

Guess what? Jesus faced opposition too. How did Jesus respond? What was his example for us when he faced that opposition? His example was that he didn't sin and he didn't lie. And when people threatened him and spoke poorly about him, he didn't respond in kind or in turn. And so when we're submitting to authority and people are speaking poorly about Christians, we don't get to go back and speak poorly about them as well.

But we bear up under suffering in the same way that Jesus did for his sake because he is our example. He's gone before us. The story's told about a man named Avram and Avram was the CEO of a chemical company in Israel.

[23 : 38] And there was a time during the history of this chemical company that there was an explosion on the line. And because of this explosion, there were two different employees who died. And Avram, as the CEO, decided, well, we're going to need to figure out what this problem is and we have to fix it.

So he did the research necessary, figured out what was wrong, made sure the problem was fixed, and then let everyone know, guess what? The problem is fixed.

The lines are now safe. Did people rush to get back to the lines? No.

So workers started quitting. And the workers who stayed were hesitant to get near those parts of the lines, even though Avram guaranteed all of them that it was safe, it was the right place to be. Nothing was going to hurt them.

And slowly, the company started to go into a downfall. Now, Avram was a smart man and he realized there was only one solution. And so he quit his job as CEO.

[24 : 43] He took a new job in the company working at the part near the line where the explosion had happened. So he was the one on the line closest to where those two people had died.

He came down from his privileged position as CEO and he took a new job right by the side of the explosion. Ten years later, the chemical company was one of the most successful companies in Israel.

brothers and sisters, Jesus has shown us by his example that the way of suffering is safe. He is not a distant and divine CEO who sends us an email to let us know that it's okay to suffer now.

But instead, he left his privileged position in heaven. He walked the way of suffering before us so that we can follow him.

And he made it safe for us. By the way, unlike Avram who only solved the problem of the explosion, Jesus made it safe by taking the full explosion of the penalty of sin on himself.

[26 : 09] Jesus is not just our example. Peter goes on to tell us that he's also our redeemer. Jesus has made suffering safe for his people.

And so we can do what Peter commands us to do here. We can bear up under suffering without striking back. We can hear people speak poorly about us without speaking poorly about them because that's what Jesus did.

Peter is talking about his journey to the cross. That's when he was reviled, verse 23, and didn't revile in turn. That's when he suffered and didn't threaten, but did what?

He continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. Because Jesus is not just our example, but also our redeemer. We can trust him. We can follow him, and we can trust him.

God never commands us to do something that he doesn't give us the power to do. And so just as Jesus suffered unjustly, if we follow him in this world, we will suffer unjustly as well.

[27 : 19] As the master, so his servants. As the teacher, so his students. As Jesus, so us.

verse 22, he spoke words that were true. Verse 23, when people speak poorly about us because we're Christians, we don't retaliate or threaten because that's not what Jesus did.

Instead, verse 23, we trusted God. As I mentioned before, Jesus took the explosion of sin. We're not just safe from suffering because of Jesus, but we're safe from the penalty of sin.

And that's how Peter ends these instructions. Verse 24, he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

By his wounds you have been healed. In other words, as I've said before, Jesus is not just our example, but he's our redeemer. He didn't just live a life as a good example for us, but he also died a death.

[28 : 25] And when Jesus died a death, that death took on to him the penalty for the sins of people who have faith in Jesus Christ. That's what it means when it says he bore our sins on the tree.

And that death doesn't just remove the penalty, but it's also what empowers us and enables us to obey God and live righteously even in the face of opposition.

And that's what it means when it says by his wounds you have been healed. God hasn't just solved the problem of the penalty of sin, he's also taken away the problem of the power of sin.

These are hard words from Peter for us. It is not easy to submit to bad authorities. And it's not easy to suffer and put up with it when we suffer unjustly, but we do it because Jesus did it and we're able to do it because Jesus now gives us the power that comes from his resurrection.

And so one of the fears that happens when we talk about Jesus as our example is the fear of crushing moralism. People think if we put Jesus as our example, we're just going to be crushed.

And if Jesus was just our example, we would be crushed.

[29 : 49] But Jesus is not just our example. He's also our Savior and as we're told here, our healer. It's by his wounds that we're healed. And so we don't follow Jesus' example afraid that we're going to fall short and face God's judgment.

But instead God gives us the power to follow Jesus' example because of what Jesus has done for us in his death and his resurrection. And then we're told finally in verse 25, not only have we been healed, verse 24, but, we were straying like sheep but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of our souls.

So we're not just walking the example of Jesus, but we're also returning to Jesus. And that is something that also empowers us and makes us able to follow Jesus' example.

Think about it this way. We have Shine Meadows Park that I've mentioned a few times. It's just a stone's throw from here right next to Otero Elementary. That's one place you could take a walk in Colorado Springs.

You could also go to Manitou Springs and walk the incline, which is straight up for one mile. Now, which walk would you rather take if you had to choose right now?

[31 : 06] There's a group from the church we're going to break into halves, we'll just break right here in the middle. Some of us are going to go into Shine Meadows, some of us are going to go hike the incline, we're not changing clothes. Clear answer, right?

Some of you are going to shift to the Shine Meadows team. But what if I told you that Jesus was at the top of the incline? When we walk the path of suffering following after Jesus' example, we are also straying sheep who are now returning to the shepherd and overseer of our souls.

We're able to walk the path that Jesus walked because it's the path that leads to Jesus. And the path matters far less when we know it's at the end of the destination.

And so we follow Jesus in his suffering. We do it because Jesus suffered. We're able to do it because his suffering was for us.

And so we suffer for him. We suffer for the Savior who suffered for us. And so it's with that hope that we come to worship him.

[32 : 27] With that hope we're going to head into our closing hymns. But I ask you before we do that to join me in prayer. and so for them. I'm going to love you. And so I'm going to wait.

And so this is wearing the severity watergy Thornton.